

U.S. Department of Education
2013 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program
A Non-Public School - 13PV213

	Charter	Title 1	Magnet	Choice
School Type (Public Schools):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Principal: Mrs. Patricia Gallagher-Kosmatka

Official School Name: Aquinas Middle School

School Mailing Address: 315 South 11th Street
La Crosse, WI 54601-4763

County: La Crosse State School Code Number*: 70

Telephone: (608) 784-0156 E-mail: patty.GK@AquinasSchools.org

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I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that all information is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*: Dr. Kurt Nelson PhD Superintendent e-mail:
kurt.nelson@aquinasschools.org

District Name: Aquinas Catholic Schools District Phone: (608) 784-8585

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Reverend Robert Schaller

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

**Non-Public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and emailed to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools (Aba.Kumi@ed.gov) or mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, National Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) or its equivalent each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's AYP requirement or its equivalent in the 2012-2013 school year. Meeting AYP or its equivalent must be certified by the state. Any AYP status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take foreign language courses.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2007 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for that period.
6. The nominated school has not received the Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 or 2012.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT

Questions 1 and 2 are for Public Schools only.

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SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located: Urban or large central city

4. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 13

5. Number of students as of October 1, 2012 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	30	32	62
8	26	39	65
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12	0	0	0
Total in Applying School:			127

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
2 % Asian
0 % Black or African American
2 % Hispanic or Latino
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
89 % White
7 % Two or more races
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2011-2012 school year: 0%
This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Step	Description	Value
(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	0
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2011 until the end of the school year.	0
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	0
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2011	121
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.00
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	0

8. Percent of English Language Learners in the school: 0%
Total number of ELL students in the school: 0
Number of non-English languages represented: 0
Specify non-English languages:

9. Percent of students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 7%

Total number of students who qualify: 9

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-priced school meals program, supply an accurate estimate and explain how the school calculated this estimate.

The school does not participate in the federal free and reduced price lunch program. This partial estimate is provided by reviewing the tax returns submitted by families during the scholarship application process. Family tax information was compared to the income eligibility guidelines of the federal school lunch program. There may be additional students who are eligible.

10. Percent of students receiving special education services: 8%

Total number of students served: 10

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>3</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>0</u> Deafness	<u>0</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>7</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>0</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>
Resource teachers/specialists (e.g., reading specialist, media specialist, art/music, PE teachers, etc.)	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff (e.g., school secretaries, custodians, cafeteria aides, etc.)	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>14</u>	<u>6</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1: 16:1

13. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Daily student attendance	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%
High school graduation rate	%	%	%	%	%

14. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools):**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2012.

Graduating class size: _____

Enrolled in a 4-year college or university _____%

Enrolled in a community college _____%

Enrolled in vocational training _____%

Found employment _____%

Military service _____%

Other _____%

Total _____**0%**

15. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award:

☒ No

☐ Yes

If yes, what was the year of the award?

PART III - SUMMARY

Aquinas Middle School is a seventh and eighth grade middle school that has served students in the La Crosse, Wisconsin area since 1992. The school is part of Aquinas Catholic Schools, a district that also includes three elementary schools and one high school. Another school in the district, Aquinas High School, was honored as a 2008 National Blue Ribbon School. Aquinas Middle School operates as a separate school with distinct administration and programs and has not been honored.

The staff of Aquinas Middle School strives to faithfully implement the middle school model. Teachers work in teams – a Grade 7 team, a Grade 8 team and an Encore (Specials) team – to meet the needs of students, provide an engaging curriculum, and ensure ongoing professional development. One of the school's strengths is that teachers collaborate; hold each other accountable; and share best practices, strategies and insights to best meet the needs of students. In 2010, Aquinas Middle School and the school system as a whole received North Central Accreditation through AdvancED. The accreditation site review team made particular note of the quality and comprehensive vision of Aquinas Middle School.

Monthly faculty meetings are held to take care of school management issues, address student needs and to develop programs, activities and events that serve the developmental needs of students. Through collaboration, the faculty created the school's Vision Statement and Motto:

Vision Statement:

Aquinas Middle School will inspire students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and lifelong learners within a safe, nurturing, Catholic environment. Students will grow spiritually, academically, creatively, socially, and physically, striving to be Christ-like influences in their communities.

Motto:

Learn - Share – Serve

Working together, the faculty also developed five Commitments to drive action toward the vision. Each team formally re-visits these Commitments quarterly, records what actions have been taken and determines team goals for the coming quarter.

Aquinas Middle School has a Teacher Advisory Program that mixes seventh and eighth grade students in groups of 8-10 to meet with a teacher several times a quarter. Quarterly themes focus on the "Standards of the Heart" and are supported with outside speakers (nutrition, health and wellness, personal safety, internet safety, fitness); teacher expertise (study skills, respect for others, kindness in word and deed); and community activities (annual food drive, Red Ribbon Week community donations, annual Christmas giving projects, "adopting" a student at the Casa Hogar orphanage in Peru, and support of the diocesan mission parish in Bolivia).

The Aquinas Middle School Student Council takes a lead role to help direct school activities and encourage student involvement. For ten years in a row, students and staff have donated more than two tons of food to a local food pantry. Annually, the students and staff of Aquinas Middle School donate over \$2,000 to the Bolivian Mission and Casa Hogar, a level of support greater than most schools in the Diocese of La Crosse.

Aquinas Middle School students have an opportunity to participate in twenty-two different clubs and athletic teams. Students are encouraged to become involved. Over 85% of middle school students join at

least one club or athletic team. In addition, 80% of Aquinas Middle School faculty members serve as a coach or advisor for one of these activities.

Aquinas Middle School students are regularly recognized for their writing, artistic, and musical talents in local and national contests. In 2012, three students were recognized at the national level for entries in the Civil War Preservation Trust poster and essay contest. Six students were recognized for the La Crosse International Day of Peace poster and writing contest. For the sixth year in a row, Aquinas Middle School students were among the top three finalists in the local American Legion annual essay contest. Two music students have been selected to participate in the 2013 Wisconsin All-State Junior Band and students regularly advance from the District Solo/Ensemble contest to the State competition.

The academic rigor at Aquinas Middle School serves to develop a solid foundation for student success in high school and beyond. Students are expected to complete homework outside of school time; to complete quarterly service hours for their community, parish and/or school; and to be accountable for their performance in regards to involvement in co-curricular activities. The Honor Level system addresses the development of responsibility and independence through a positive reinforcement method. Monthly student awards recognize students for character, service, leadership, and effort in all curricular areas. Each school year concludes with the presentation of the Young Catholic Scholars Awards honoring these same criteria plus outstanding academic achievement.

Preparing students for the next level while enjoying the experience of middle school is a fundamental goal of Aquinas Middle School.

PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results:

Aquinas Middle School students in seventh and eighth grades are assessed annually through the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). The Aquinas Middle School average student percentile scores for reading and mathematics exceed the test publisher's cutoff scores that define the top 15% of schools. This distinction has been true for both seventh and eighth grades in each of the last six years. During the 2011-2012 school year, enrollment was approximately 60 students per grade and there were fewer than ten students per grade level in any of the specified subgroups. Therefore, scores are not disaggregated by eligibility for free or reduced-price meals, ethnic/racial groups, disabilities, or limited English proficiency.

All eighth graders and 97% of seventh graders participated in the standardized assessments in 2011-2012. Students are expected to score at the current grade level. When scores fall outside that range, intervention plans are developed or reviewed and revised. During 2011-2012, two seventh grade students were served through a collaborative effort with the local Catholic Charities Disabilities Services Program that provided, and continues to provide, a licensed special education teacher who uses a modified curriculum for the two students. Both students have been diagnosed with Autism and significant Cognitive Disabilities. As a part of their educational plan, they do not participate in standardized summative assessments. Instead, the special education teacher utilizes frequent formative assessments.

A comparison of scores reveals that Aquinas Middle School is regularly one of the top scoring middle schools in the Diocese. A longitudinal analysis of assessment data reveals that middle school students improve in both Mathematics and Reading scores from sixth to seventh grade and again from seventh to eighth grade. The eighth grade class of 2011-2012 increased Mathematics scores to the 80th percentile (from 72nd percentile their seventh grade year) and also increased Reading scores to the 77th percentile (from 76th percentile in seventh grade). The eighth grade class of 2010-2011 increased Mathematics scores to the 81st percentile (from 75th percentile during seventh grade) and also increased Reading scores to the 78th percentile (up from 74th percentile in seventh grade).

In 2009-2010 seventh grade test scores decreased, although the scores were still above the ITBS cutoff scores. This was the year that the testing window changed from mid-winter (February) to late fall (October/November). The change was made in order to provide opportunity for more effective use of assessment results. This change allowed results to be received and analyzed immediately and implemented before the beginning of the third quarter. The improved seventh grade scores for 2011-2012 demonstrate that teachers have effectively realigned the school's curriculum to the new testing window to ensure the tests provide an effective and accurate measurement of student understanding. As a result, the grade seven Reading score from 2010-2011 to 2011-2012 improved nine percentile points to the 85th percentile and the grade seven Mathematics score increased seven points to the 79th percentile.

These assessment results exceed the cutoff scores required for Aquinas Middle School to be designated an *Exemplary High Performing School*.

2. Using Assessment Results:

The annual results of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) help the faculty monitor the school's curriculum and instructional effectiveness. Aquinas Middle School uses assessment data in collective and individual ways. Test results are analyzed by the administration, grade level teams, and individual teachers to determine areas of strength and gaps in each particular grade level and curricular area. Test results are typically received in December and data analysis begins immediately to ensure that teachers

can make adjustments and incorporate needed interventions immediately. The collaborative reviewing and sharing process is a critical step in meeting the needs of students.

In 2009-2010 the school also began contracting with Riverside Publishing to provide access to the ITBS Interactive Results Manager (IRM) for all instructional staff. This online tool allows administrators and teachers the ability to review school-wide, class-wide and individual assessment results. This tool also allows instructional staff to review longitudinal progress, disaggregate data, view proficiency charts, and identify low and high performing students by subtests. Teachers have been trained in the use of this system and refresher training is conducted each year.

In addition to the online IRM tool, the faculty also reviews the printed individual Performance Profile reports to pinpoint specific strengths, weaknesses, and areas that need further reinforcement. Specific skills are reviewed on an individual, classroom, and school wide basis to identify necessary adjustments. In addition to single year scores, the faculty also looks for patterns that indicate whether student growth is on pace, lagging, or accelerating.

Individual assessment data helps guide the learning program for a student. For instance, a strength in mathematics will allow students to enroll in the Accelerated Math (grade 7) and Algebra (grade 8) courses. A weakness in reading may help determine classroom assessment strategies that most suit the evidence of mastery of material. That same weakness may also lead to using audio or para-professional support to better develop reading skills in the day to day classroom learning.

The needs of students found performing below grade level are also reviewed by the Aquinas Middle School Principal and Counselor. When appropriate, the principal and counselor work with school faculty and staff to develop an Individual Student Plan (ISP) to document and clarify, for all faculty and staff, what accommodations and learning strategies should be used with a student. If warranted, students may also be referred for additional evaluation by the public school system and/or medical providers. The faculty and administration support and follow Individual Educational Programs (IEP) that is created by public school districts. Meetings with family, community support professionals, and faculty members are held regularly to assure compliance and assess a student's progress and needs.

The school has implemented the Response to Intervention tiered framework and the faculty has clarified the Essential Learning Outcomes for each course and grade level. These outcomes focus attention on the areas that have the greatest impact on student achievement during the present year and future years. Formal and informal assessment results are used as significant indicators for areas that need further intervention. These interventions may require changes in universal classroom practices (Tier One), more targeted interventions for individual or small groups of students (Tier Two) or intensive interventions for specific students (Tier Three). The school system's Learning Needs Committee is implementing a Curriculum Based Measurement (CBM) assessment tool to provide more frequent universal screening and individual progress monitoring. Aquinas Middle School will begin administering this formative assessment in the spring of 2013.

Results are shared with parents through written reports. The principal, counselor, and teachers help parents interpret the reports and answer specific questions about their child's progress. In addition, the school-level composite scores are reported annually to the community through various district communications.

3. Sharing Lessons Learned:

Student learning information and observations are regularly shared by the faculty of Aquinas Middle School via weekly team meetings. The School Counselor and Principal become involved as necessary to address student concerns and needs, develop student plans, and network with outside resources to best serve the needs of students. Information is passed to future high school teachers through the counselor,

principal, and/or a shared student management system (Skyward). Official and unofficial administrative and educational records are shared seamlessly and efficiently to promote timely discussions and review of the needs of particular students. These systems also allow for the sharing of successes and concerns as a student progresses in their formal education. This opportunity is extremely beneficial in providing a continuity of care to meet the needs of students on an individual level.

Aquinas Middle School recently expanded its Skyward Student Management System by investing in an integrated Response to Intervention module. This allows information to be immediately available in full detail to appropriate instructional staff, helping teachers to effectively convey to other educational professionals what has been found to be most effective for a particular student's needs. This RtI module facilitates detailed sharing within grade level teams, between core and encore instructors, and between grade levels as students advance. Aquinas Middle School teachers have engaged with educators from other school districts and the regional Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA), formally through workshops and informally through phone calls, visits and discussions, to ensure that the system is customized to provide Aquinas staff the information needed to consistently meet the needs of students.

Aquinas Middle School has shared its progress in learning about and implementing the RtI framework with the faculty of the other schools in the system via the system's Learning Needs Committee and Administrative Team meetings. In addition, the principals of diocesan middle schools meet bi-annually and the Aquinas principal regularly provides information to other principals on effective middle school curriculum, scheduling, instruction, and student supports. The middle school goal is to develop quality interventions, share best practices and strategies, and use data to challenge each student to achieve at a high level.

4. Engaging Families and Communities:

The faculty of Aquinas Middle School believes that communication and support from the family and community is vital to the growth and development of students. Communication folders containing a newsletter from the principal and additional information are sent home each week after students discuss and review the information in homerooms. The newsletter is also posted on the school's web page.

Student-Parent-Teacher conferences formally occur twice during the school year. The first conference is held in early October. This conference allows an opportunity to discuss successes and challenges that have initially presented themselves in the classroom. The insights of the teacher, student and parent are critical in developing plans to best meet the needs of the student. The value of this mid-first quarter conferencing is immeasurable and provides an opportunity for goal setting and discussion in a positive manner. Conferences are held in the middle of the third quarter as well to formally revisit student progress. Student and parent attendance at these conferences ranges from 95-99%.

Teachers are also available to work with students before and after school via formal appointments or informally by just stopping in. The efforts of both the faculty and students to find ways to be successful creates a positive environment in which student needs can be served. Parents are encouraged to contact teachers and meet with them individually, as a grade level team and/or with the School Counselor and Principal. All of these opportunities provide avenues of working together to help young people succeed.

The community is very supportive in helping meet the needs of all learners. Seventh graders go to the library annually to learn about research, see materials available to them and learn from library personnel how to find resources to help them in their quest for knowledge and information. This is followed-up with a grade 7 cross-curricular unit (Olympics, World Tours, March to the Civil War, Activities for Life). Eighth graders go to Viterbo University to learn the value of "making high school count", tour the university and develop a clearer picture of college, and meet with a panel of college students. This is part of the eighth grade Career Unit that also includes a Career Fair when local speakers meet with students. Reaching out to the community is both beneficial and essential in providing opportunities for students.

PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Curriculum:

The Aquinas Middle School curriculum is based on national and state standards and the needs of its students. The faculty and administration embrace the middle school philosophy and strive to provide a developmentally responsive curriculum delivered through effective instructional practices.

The goals of the English curriculum are to form strong grammar, usage, and mechanics; strengthen oral communication abilities; and develop essay, persuasive, and creative writing skills. Study of the major literary genres includes classical and contemporary short stories, plays, and novels. Students build vocabulary, while analyzing characters, settings, plots, and themes.

The Mathematics curriculum uses a variety of strategies for solving problems. Integers, proportions, percents, exponents, square roots, and geometry are topics of investigation. An Accelerated Math course in seventh grade and Algebra in eighth grade is offered.

As a Catholic school, Religion is a core academic subject. The spiritual growth of all students is a key curricular goal. Seventh grade curriculum is based on Sacred Scripture. Eighth grade curriculum focuses on Church History. Through study of Christ and the saints, students put their faith into action by sharing their time and talents in our school, parishes and community.

The seventh grade Science curriculum focuses on life science. Some topics include cell structure and function, genetics, the classification of living organisms, systems of the human body, and ecology. The eighth grade science curriculum encompasses earth science topics such as atmosphere, oceans, landmasses, earth processes, rocks and minerals, and space. Projects, demonstrations, and laboratories are an integral part of instruction.

The Social Studies curriculum consists of the study of United States History from the beginnings of the Civil War through World War I. Also studied are the world regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Russia. Incorporated into all areas of study are geography skills, the knowledge of economic and political systems, and behavioral and social issues.

All students take courses in the visual arts and music. In Visual Arts, students learn the elements of art and the principles of composition. Art history and describing, analyzing and interpreting famous works of art are integrated into each unit.

Students have a choice of Instrumental (Band or Strings), Vocal, or General Music courses. Students perform in concerts, pep band and solo and ensemble competitions. Choir students learn how to sing 3-4 part harmonies. Aquinas Middle School offers an audition only Honor Choir for eighth grade students. The General Music course focuses on the appreciation and understanding of music. Students learn about different instruments and review and study various musical genres, composers, and history.

The Physical Education curriculum provides exposure to a variety of activities and strives to develop an appreciation for physical activity. By providing positive experiences with awareness that many sports are lifetime activities, students develop a lifelong appreciation for fitness.

The Computer Education curriculum includes the study of computer hardware and software. Projects are integrated with other curricular areas. Students practice keyboarding skills. They use Word, PowerPoint, Paint, Excel, and Video Editing. Safe and proper use of the internet, digital cameras, and scanning products are emphasized. Students use technology to locate, evaluate, and present information to others.

Aquinas Middle School is in compliance with the program's foreign language requirements. Ninety percent of Aquinas Middle School students are enrolled in Spanish or French. The curriculum focuses on the fundamentals of understanding and speaking the language. Students learn Catholic prayers and are exposed to the culture, poetry, and music of people who speak the language. Students with a "B" average advance to Level II in high school.

Aquinas Middle School prepares students for a rigorous college-prep high school curriculum.

2. Reading/English:

Aquinas Middle School has a Language Arts and Literature combined curriculum. Teachers use lecture, guided work, independent work, group work, and technology resources to develop student knowledge and skills.

The Language Arts portion of the curriculum is designed to provide opportunities for students to develop their writing, speaking, and listening skills through a variety of applications as well as develop skills in grammar, usage, and mechanics. This encompasses problem-solving essays, persuasive compositions, and research papers along with creative writing which is guided through poetry and short stories. The curriculum also focuses on helping students develop oral communication skills through public speaking and individual and group oral presentations.

The Literature portion of the curriculum includes a study of the major literary genres. Students read a wide variety of classical and contemporary pieces of literature including short stories, plays, and novels. Students build vocabulary, and analyze characters, settings, plots, and themes. The literature curriculum provides an opportunity to discuss characters and stories of faith, courage, and love which illustrate our Catholic beliefs.

At Aquinas Middle School, all students are required to have with them, at all times, a reading book for enjoyment. STARS time (Sitting Together and Reading Silently) is provided for the first fifteen minutes of every study hall. Teachers are also required to participate in this reading time to model its importance. Students are expected to reflect, in journal format, on their readings each week. The purpose of this activity is to keep reading alive in its purest form – reading for pleasure – during the busyness of school and life. This, combined with opportunity for reflection, allows students to expand their horizons beyond the classroom.

To meet the variety of needs of student learners, Aquinas Middle School offers a guided resource time for those students who have identified struggles with reading, writing and comprehension. The Resource Room, staffed with a licensed teacher, is available to help student learners reach a level of proficiency and beyond.

Aquinas Middle School offers opportunities for the advanced learner through our annual Battle of the Books competition; competing in the annual Diocesan Brains Tournament; and submitting work to competitions such as the Patriot's Pen, Diocesan Christmas Contest, Poetry contest, and others. These activities provide opportunities for those who excel in Language Arts to continue to reach for higher challenges.

3. Mathematics:

The Mathematics curriculum of Aquinas Middle School allows students to explore and practice a variety of strategies for solving real-world problems. Number patterns involving integers, exponents, square roots, and geometry are topics of investigation. Basic operations involving integers, proportions, and percents are mastered. Working with algebraic expressions, translating real-life problems into symbolic

equations, solving multi-step equations, and using formulas and variables in geometry are basic preparation for Algebra.

Students, who have demonstrated a strong ability in Mathematics through a review of previous academic grades, standardized testing data and a placement exam administered at the end of sixth grade, may take an Accelerated Math course in seventh grade and Algebra as eighth graders. These courses are designed to challenge and extend students' mathematical understanding and reasoning. Course goals include analyzing and interpreting real-world problems algebraically and using symbols and mathematical words to communicate effectively. Students learn to evaluate numerical and algebraic expressions, simplify and factor polynomials, apply formulas, solve literal equations, solve and graph equalities and inequalities, and solve systems of equations. A strong foundation in algebra prepares students for the study of geometry, probability, and data analysis in high school.

The mathematics instructors incorporate lecture, guided note-taking, group work, guided work time, station work, daily review, frequent assessment, and technology resources into their daily teaching. Hands on activities include a string art unit; a study of personal finance via check books, restaurant tipping, shopping for "the best deal" and income taxes; and the creation of icosahedrons. These activities provide an enjoyable part of the curriculum for students and adults alike.

To meet the variety of needs of student learners, Aquinas Middle School offers a guided resource time for those students who have identified struggles with mathematics. The Resource Room, staffed with a licensed teacher, is available to help student learners reach a level of proficiency and beyond. The math instructor provides math lessons during resource periods to help students fill the gaps that have been identified through observation and standardized testing data.

Aquinas Middle School implemented a new math series in the 2011-2012 school year. It has proven to be a challenging series that raises the bar for all students. Success is evident due to teacher expertise, student determination and a support system to promote student achievement.

4. Additional Curriculum Area:

The Aquinas Middle School seventh and eighth grade Social Studies curriculum consists of the study of United States history from the beginnings of the Civil War through World War I (1820-1920). Also studied are the world regions of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Russia. Incorporated into all areas of study are geography skills, the knowledge of economic and political systems, and behavioral as well as social issues. Cross-curricular planning and technology integration allow many opportunities for unique student experiences. Projects, simulations, lectures, research, and group activities also enhance the content.

A major focus of the grade 7 Social Studies curriculum is the study of the Civil War. This study places a heavy emphasis on critical thinking skills, understanding human interactions, decision-making, and the ramifications of decisions. Students create their own Road Map to the Civil War. From there, the classroom becomes a North & South simulation. Students embrace the roles of generals, soldiers, citizens, and slaves. Journals reflecting the era and circumstances are written by students through the eyes of their character. Daily in class, the bugle calls everyone to attention, roll call is taken, battles are discussed, and feelings and rationales for decisions are shared. Students discuss and research how to survive on the battlefield, how to feed families during the war, how to buy goods and services needed for survival, and much more. Part of the unit involves a trip to a local Civil War reenactment setting. Students spend a morning seeing first hand some of the hardships and challenges faced during the Civil War. Students demonstrate great enthusiasm about the Civil War study. This carries into their high school courses and beyond.

Eighth grade students continue to study the United States with a Wild West Day. This is the culmination of studying Westward Expansion and the personalities that affected the growth of our nation. Students dress the role of a character and present information they have prepared to their classmates. The grade 8 team of teachers joins in and dresses the part as well. Students embrace this type of learning and are quite creative in researching appropriate dress and conditions for the era.

This approach to teaching leads students to become critical thinkers and problem solvers, and brings history to life for students at Aquinas Middle School.

5. Instructional Methods:

Teachers at Aquinas Middle School use a diverse array of instructional methods to meet the various learning styles of students. These strategies are used in combination with each other to maximize student enthusiasm, understanding, application, and retention of both knowledge and skills.

Teachers appeal to visual learning styles through the use of maps, charts, overhead projectors, computer clips, and creative projects. Students with tactile and kinesthetic learning styles find many hands-on activities in science and art and use note-taking packets in mathematics to stay engaged during the introduction of new material. In particular, the addition of SMARTBoard interactive whiteboards provides students the opportunity to interact with content in a way that provides immediate feedback and reinforcement. Interpersonal learning styles are addressed through simulation activities, drama, and small group projects.

Teachers have the ability to adjust the regular schedule to enhance student learning. Speakers, Teacher Advisory time, Masses, field trips, experiments, or other activities may lead to adjustments in the daily schedule. The middle school uses a true block schedule of core and encore time, which is crucial to providing teachers with the flexibility to use community resources and meet the needs of students. At their weekly team meeting times, teachers plan any adjustments to the schedule.

To support and reinforce classroom instruction, teachers assign homework and help students with organizational skills to ensure success. Aquinas Middle School has an established method of recording homework via the assignment notebook, establishing a 'say it and write it' method to teach students the value of using the notebook, and monitoring the notebook use to develop good habits for success in high school and beyond. This school wide initiative is a key component of our school.

The positive learning environment at Aquinas Middle School is a key component to successful student learning and teacher instruction. Collaboration between teachers, students, parents, and community resources helps the school best meet student needs and promotes an exciting atmosphere that values high achievement.

6. Professional Development:

Aquinas Middle School embraces the Professional Learning Community (PLC) concept and provides collaborative meeting time for faculty members. Meetings take place bi-weekly during a common preparation time for teams of teachers. This meeting time is specifically designed for teachers to learn about and implement the Response to Intervention model. Identifying Essential Learning Outcomes has taken teachers to a new level of looking at key student learning techniques and ways to best assist students. The school counselor and para-professional also attend the PLC meetings and are able to help implement and share options to successfully impact student learning.

New teachers are provided with a formal mentor outside of their teaching team who helps introduce them to the Aquinas Middle School setting and philosophy, and guides them through day-to-day needs. The mentoring program was designed and is implemented by the principal and supported by master teachers.

Teachers at Aquinas Middle School regularly attend summer workshops to gain knowledge in their subject area, implement best teaching practices, and strengthen skills in working with educational technology – especially SMARTBoards and iPads. Recent professional development opportunities have focused on helping teachers strengthen their knowledge base in regards to the Response to Intervention model in order to better implement the RtI program at Aquinas Middle School. During the school year, the school system, Diocese, and the Cooperative Educational Service Agency provide workshops and in-service trainings for teachers and administrators. Teachers are also provided with opportunities to attend other area workshops and share their knowledge at faculty meetings as well as within their team settings.

Professional Development is an on-going formal and informal part of the Aquinas Catholic Schools system and involves several Aquinas Middle School faculty members. The Learning Needs Committee focuses on implementing the RtI framework of assessment and interventions system wide. This committee is led by the Aquinas Middle School principal and includes two middle school faculty members, the school counselor and para-professional. The Accreditation Committee is responsible for school improvement plans and includes the Aquinas Middle School principal and teacher-in-charge. Finally, an Aquinas Middle School teacher serves on the Teacher Advisory Committee which meets regularly with the school system president to provide effective support to classroom teachers. The work of each of these committees helps strengthen Aquinas Middle School and ensures strong continuity of student learning through elementary school, Aquinas Middle School, and high school.

7. School Leadership:

Aquinas Middle School operates under the direction of one principal. The philosophy of the principal is built on the school vision and motto. Decisions and discussion are driven with the goal of developing ways to inspire students to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and lifelong learners within the safe, nurturing, Catholic environment at Aquinas Middle School.

The principal has established three teams of teachers (Core 7, Core 8, and Encore) that meet two to four times weekly to discuss and address student concerns, organize and plan the daily schedule needs, and share best teaching practices and ideas. These teams consist of four to seven teachers. The team leader is responsible for keeping teams focused on the three topics above, reporting information to the principal and sharing necessary information with teammates from the principal. Members of each team take on an additional responsibility – scheduling, student concerns recorder, and liaison to other teams. Each role is separate and requires teachers to communicate with other team members, the principal and the school counselor as is appropriate.

The principal, in addition to monthly faculty meetings, has established an Administrative Team that meets monthly after school. This team consists of the three team leaders and the teacher-in-charge. The role of this team is to review calendar information, plan for activities and events that enhance school climate and student learning, and share needs and ideas to keep Aquinas Middle School moving forward in serving the students, families and community. This forum provides opportunity, above and beyond the daily principal open door policy, for ideas to be shared and developed in a positive and collaborative climate.

It is clearly established and supported that all team members are responsible to help students grow spiritually, academically, creatively, socially, and physically through the planning of all school assemblies, cross-curricular units, Teacher Advisory themes, and opportunities for student prayer, worship, and the sacraments.

PART VI - PRIVATE SCHOOL ADDENDUM

1. Private school association: Catholic

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3) status? Yes

3. What are the 2012-2013 tuition rates, by grade? (Do not include room, board, or fees.)

K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>
6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
<u>\$</u>	<u>\$2890</u>	<u>\$2890</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>
12th	Other				
<u>\$</u>	<u>\$</u>				

4. What is the educational cost per student? (School budget divided by enrollment) \$7884

5. What is the average financial aid per student? \$933

6. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction?
35%

7. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction?
100%

PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

NATIONAL NORMS-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 7

Test: Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
(ITBS)

Edition/Publication Year: Form
C

Publisher: Riverside
Publishing

Scores reported as: Percentiles

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Nov	Nov	Oct	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	79	72	75	84	80
Number of students tested	58	61	84	68	83
Percent of total students tested	97	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	0	0	0	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					
During 2011-2012, two students were served by a collaborative program with Catholic Charities that provides licensed special education teachers and a modified curriculum. These students have been diagnosed with autism and cognitive disabilities. As a part of their educational plan, they do not participate in standardized summative assessments. Instead, teachers utilize frequent formative assessments.					

13PV213

NATIONAL NORMS-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 7

Test: Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
(ITBS)

Edition/Publication Year: Form
C

Publisher: Riverside
Publishing

Scores reported as: Percentiles

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Nov	Nov	Oct	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	85	76	74	83	79
Number of students tested	58	61	84	68	83
Percent of total students tested	97	100	100	100	99
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	1
Percent of students alternatively assessed	3	0	0	0	1
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					
During 2011-2012, two students were served by a collaborative program with Catholic Charities that provides licensed special education teachers and a modified curriculum. These students have been diagnosed with autism and cognitive disabilities. As a part of their educational plan, they do not participate in standardized summative assessments. Instead, teachers utilize frequent formative assessments.					

13PV213

NATIONAL NORMS-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 8

Test: Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
(ITBS)

Edition/Publication Year: Form
C

Publisher: Riverside
Publishing

Scores reported as: Percentiles

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Nov	Nov	Oct	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	80	81	84	83	85
Number of students tested	61	81	71	82	64
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

13PV213

NATIONAL NORMS-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Reading

Grade: 8

Test: Iowa Tests of Basic Skills
(ITBS)

Edition/Publication Year: Form
C

Publisher: Riverside
Publishing

Scores reported as: Percentiles

	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008
Testing Month	Nov	Nov	Oct	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	77	78	82	81	81
Number of students tested	61	81	71	82	64
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Free/Reduced-Price Meals/Socio-economic Disadvantaged Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. African American Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Hispanic or Latino Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
4. Special Education Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
5. English Language Learner Students					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
6.					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
NOTES:					

13PV213